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Marderpa	⟷	Marungun
Marungun	⟷	Yalukal, Yandjinung (tribe)
Merango	⟷	Darlwongo
Naladaer	⟷	Daiuror
Perango	⟷	Kolpa, Birkili
Wangurri	⟷	Kalpu, Maradunggimi, Djirin, Kapin
Warumeri	⟷	Kalpu
Yalukal	⟷	Marungun

Examining this list of intermarrying clans in connection with the map (page 40), we see that they usually adjoin or are but a short distance apart. When Murngin warfare is discussed later in this chapter, it will be seen that the clans which are in competition for women from another particular clan are usually antagonistic groups and belong to opposing sides in the clan feuds.

A man always calls his own totems bapa (father), marikmo (paternal grandfather), or occasionally old gatu (paternal grandfather's father), according to the relationship term that his father applies to the emblem. If his father calls a totem bapa, ego applies the term marikmo to it; when the father addresses it as older brother, ego calls it bapa. In other words, a man applies the rule of kinship to his relationship with his totem by tracing his relationship to it as though it were an actual relative of his father. Often this nicety is not completely observed, and all the ranga are called by the single term bapa. Ego traces his relationship to totems of another clan through his nearest and most important relative in that clan. He would apply the term mari to a totem if it came from a clan having the mari and marelker line of descent as ego's nearest relatives in it, or he would use the term gawel (mother's brother) or arndi (mother) if the totem came from his mother's group. The members of a clan may all call the same outside clan's totems by different terms, since they may all be in different relationships to the men within these outside groups. The use of this kinship device further articulates ego with the local organization outside his own group, which gives him a greater sense of solidarity.

Sharing of totems occurs largely with clans belonging to the same moiety and will be discussed under the sections on moiety and phratries.

Murngin Moieties

Yiritja and Dua are the intertribal names for the moieties of this North Australian culture. All of the eight tribes considered in this paper, except the Burera, refer to their moieties by these names. The

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616 trated in an autobiography collected by the writer: The narrator said
835 laughingly that as very small children (three or four years old) the
857 boys and girls "played house" together, and although they did not know what galle and dué (husband and wife) meant, the two sexes called each other by these terms when they were playing as though they were in the right relationship; but he added, "No Yiritja boy ever played house with a Yiritja girl and no Dua boy ever did this with a Dua girl. We always did this properly." On being asked how they, as children, knew this was the right way, he said, "That is something I always knew." Other similar occurrences related of the author's informant's and others' childhood indicate the emotional depth of the dual division in the mental make-up of these people, for it goes back of memory in the experience of the individual. Since a native's memory for the events of his early life is even better than our own, it will be seen how early the discipline of the dual division makes itself felt.

616 The great ceremonies also help to keep the things of the universe
796 in their correct categories and to establish their correct relationships to each other, since at least once each year they dramatize the mythologies. Most of the great ceremonies belong to the Dua moiety—the Ul-mark, Djung-guan, Gun-a-bi-bi, and Marn-di-el-la—while the Nar-ra totemic ceremony is divided into two parts, one for each moiety; the first three ceremonies of the garma corroborees, which celebrate the spiritual life of the lesser totems, are Dua, because they are associated with Yur-lung-gur and Mu-it, the great snakes, which are Dua, and because they are connected with the two creator sisters who belong to this moiety. Even though the larger ceremonies are supposedly Dua in ownership, actually both groups participate, and in their structure both are given an equal rôle. The only practical difference in these dramatic rituals is that all ceremonies owned by the Dua are led by headmen of clans belonging to this moiety.

616 There are no headmen for moieties, although, as will be seen in the discussion of myth and ceremony, the headman of the Liaalaomir holds a place almost equaling in position that which the leader of a moiety would possess.

616 Intra-moiety fights are common; in fact, more common than war-
578 fare with clans of the opposing moiety. No clans would join together to fight another people simply because they belong to the same moiety; nor, were this reason advanced, would it prevent fighting within the moiety. The struggle for women among members of the

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same moiety is too keen to be overcome by an appeal to moiety solidarity.

Various parts of the ceremonies are used to give expression to the dual division. In the Djungguan ceremony, subsections, when calling up their dead ancestors, are placed in the moiety order; that is, first the four Dua subsections and then the four Yiritja take turns in calling the names and the illustrious deeds of their dead ancestors. At the end of this ceremony, when food is eaten ritualistically, the members of the two groups exchange food. During the Gunabibi only Dua men paint themselves, since it is taboo for Yiritja men so to decorate themselves for this particular ceremony. Dua men, however, cannot construct the great Yer-mer-lin-di totemic emblem, and this duty and privilege devolves upon Yiritja men, in exchange for which service the Dua men present the Yiritja men with food and other presents. The Dua use a round grave post to mark their burial spots or when they wish to erect a monument to the spirit of a newly dead person belonging to their moiety, whereas the coastal Yiritja raise a ceremonial mast for their dead. The Dua use red feather decorations for their Narra ceremonies; the Yiritja use opossum fur.

The totems themselves are largely divided on the basis of the moiety. The list of the clans with their totems, page 39 ff., will show that most clans of one moiety possess their totems in common. There is a considerable regional variation, but the differences are not due to clan divisions. Very occasionally a clan will possess a totem that no other owns, but this is only a temporary condition, for the myth of the two creator women usually is sufficient proof of ownership to other clans, so that in a short time they accept this new totem as their own, provided they belong to the same moiety as the original clan. For example, on the eastern side of Arnhem Land, along the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, all of the Dua clan have totems such as a yam stick, old woman, and young woman, while the Dua clans in the west, which center around the Goyder River, are more concerned with a snake and a complex of totems which surround it, and less with the women and their totemic objects. There seems to be an historical basis for this division which will be discussed later.

The Phratry

There is a weak attempt on the part of the Murngin to form groups of clans within the moiety, based on the mythological idea of a common association with a common creator totem or an alleged similarity

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615 of language differentiating one group from surrounding groups of
197 clans. This grouping on a phratry basis, by no means general, is very weak and of no great importance.

The Warumeri, Wangurri, Wulkara, and Gwiyamil all call themselves Man-dji-kai (sand fly), supposedly the general name for their several languages. Although there is a considerable dialectic variation among the clans within this group, each claiming a distinct language for itself, they all insist that these languages are similar, and distinct and separate from those of all other clans. Even a cursory examination of the vocabularies shows that this is a rationalization, and once again a use of the linguistic criterion which the native feels he must have to separate peoples as his own or as different. The Kolpa of the Yaernungo tribe on Wessel Island and the Wallamungo of the Burera tribe on Millingimbi in the Crocodile group are sometimes added to the Mandjikai group. The Wallamungo speak a very different language so that one who knew only the Murngin tongue could not understand their language; thus it is impossible for the native to apply his linguistic criterion here as a definition for the phratry solidarity. Here, then, they fall back on their mythological association: in the days of Wongar (when totems walked the earth as men), Barrimundi came from the Wangurri country and tried to go on through to the other clans, but the whale and crayfish totems prevented him; in his efforts to force his way through, he smashed himself into many pieces which flew for many miles and landed in the territories of the other totemic clans in his phratry group and made their totemic water holes.

615 A Murngin says, "When I am in trouble I remember my ranga (high totem) and I go ask his people for help." What he means is not that he would go to the whole of his moiety, but that he would appeal to members of his phratry, connected with him by a myth which is confined to the clans in the smaller group. This manifestation of
● [578] phratry solidarity is weak, however, and frequently the people within it are the very ones who are in the most intense disputes. Instead of going to members of his own phratry in a time of crisis, a clansman would be far more likely to appeal to his mother's clan. In other words, his kinship organization is more powerful in directing his actions than is his local organization, since it is the demands the kinship organization makes upon the members of the clan which force the whole group to act, rather than the demands made by the clan organized as a local unit.

Other phratries are the Garl-ba-nuk (catfish) of the Mandelpui and

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593 [582 43] Brothers look to their sisters to supply them with wakus for their daughters to marry. A waku's importance to a man is no less than that of a son. A brother always makes presents to his sister for her son, as well as to her husband.

[262 224] A brother, but no sister, may eat a youth's kill of kangaroo, emu, et cetera, until the youth's wife has had a child. A sister is supposed to help carry the ruddled bones of the first kangaroo or emu killed by her brother, just as she helps carry her dead brother's bones.

[551] A brother and father always know and keep the tabooed names of a girl. No woman knows her ceremonial name.

593 601 There are two sets of behavior in the relationship of a brother and sister that must be treated together (see pages 110-112 for an interpretation of the Wakinu and Mirriri customs). First, she is called wakinu by all her brothers. In its primary sense, wakinu means a person without kin, and secondarily "worthless" or, more expressively, "rubbish." [176] Bamapama, the trickster hero, a much-loved scoundrel who lived in the olden days and broke all laws, is always wakinu after some particularly fantastic escapade of his has been retold. Wakinu is used during a fight as an appropriate term against one's enemies. Secondly, 593 no brother can hear his sister sworn at or hear obscene speech in her 196 presence, such as is very common otherwise. Ordinarily, when a man's 831 anger rises, he immediately bursts into an almost pyrotechnical display of abuse, most of it centering around sex, breaking of incest taboos, peculiarities of the genitalia, irregularities in the sexual act between men and women, et cetera. The aversion to hearing or using such profanity in front of a sister is called "mirriri" (ear-thing). It really means, "My ear can't hear obscenity in front of my sister." An older man said, "It is just the same as if I had been hit on the head with a club when I hear that." Another said, "My heart jumps and stops, jumps and stops, when I hear that mirriri."

602 578 195 Malambunu had come home and found his food unprepared by his wife, Dangra. A quarrel resulted in which he called her matamakmi (incestuous). She did not swear at him. A near-clan brother of Dangra, Badunga, heard the swearing and became very angry. He gathered a bundle of spears, hooked them one by one to his spear-thrower, and threw them at a large number of the women in the native camp, including Dangra. An investigation showed that every one of the women at whom he threw was called yeppa by him.

Balli, an adolescent girl, called her own mother dalardumaru (big vagina).

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Natjurili, a near-clan brother of the mother, heard the girl use this term. He, too, threw spears at all his sisters, tribal and blood. 602 578 196

A general camp fight was on; Dimala, who wanted the combatants to stop, cried, "Stop swearing at each other. If you don't stop calling each other names, I'll have to go throw spears at all my sisters."

If Malambunu had sworn at Badunga's near brother as he had at Badunga's sister, there would have been a quarrel and possible fight; such swearing between men, however, only happens when there is already a fight on. If Balli had sworn at Natjurili's mother or daughter, he would have done nothing.[1]

The person who swears most frequently at a man's sister is her husband, especially in a connubial quarrel. The husband is ego's dué, with whom he has one of the strongest relationships. 593 578 605

Yeppa ⟷ *Yeppa* (sister ⟷ sister)

There are the following varieties of this relationship: (1) sisters from the same father and mother and having the same husband; (2) sisters from the same father and mother but having different husbands; (3) sisters having the same husband but different fathers and mothers; (4) wives of brothers of one clan; (5) near-clan sisters; and (6) distant-clan sisters. 593 602

There are no taboos between sisters. Younger sisters are disciplined and protected by the older ones. The older ones also teach the younger ones how to make baskets, earn their living, and do the things they should as members of Murngin culture.

Bapa ⟷ *Gatu* (father ⟷ child)

There are five varieties of this relationship, in the following order of importance: (1) the blood father; (2) his brothers; (3) fathers more remote than the first two, but in the same clan; (4) fathers from nearby clans; and (5) fathers from remote clans.

A definite distinction is made between actual father and father's brothers, blood sons and brothers' sons; between father's own brothers and clan brothers of the father. Clan solidarity sharply divides fathers within and outside of the clan. There may or may not be a difference in the emotional attitude of a father and son from a nearby clan and a father and son from a more distant clan. The usual behavior between father and son generally does not hold between a distant son and

[1] There is some evidence that the father is also supposed to participate in the mirriri, but this feeling must be very weak since no concrete evidence was collected and it was spoken of but once by a Murngin man, and then only in passing.

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593 Thus far, the whole relationship is one of solidarity, and little potentiality for conflict appears.

835 Murngin polygyny usually implies that a man will acquire wives
595 throughout his lifetime. Through the operation of tribal laws a very old man frequently gets young girls for wives. All these women are arndi to the sons, but often young men cohabit clandestinely with their father's younger wives. These must be only tribal relatives of the sons' actual mothers. Even so, the practice is considered wrong, but the feeling is not strong enough to prevent a sexually active son from
[518] cohabiting with a father's wife. Should the old man discover it, he would be very angry and reprove his son by calling him a dog, et cetera, but it is generally agreed that an old man beyond the age where sexual life interests him would not "growl very hard."

582 Sometimes when a son is too young to marry, a father may take his
593 boy's galle as a wife (she is "small" arndi to the father) to keep someone else from getting her, because of the son's immaturity. The
835 son would call this woman arndi until the father's death; then he
518 inherits her and calls her galle. Any children born to her by the father would be called yukiyuko or yeppa and not gatu by the son. Frequently a son considers it his right to copulate with her (not openly), which causes the father much pain. The younger man would have abuse heaped on his head, but there would never be a fight over such a problem, or any other, between a father and son so long as they belonged to the same clan; however, a dispute between "sons" and "fathers" of different clans often leads to fights and occasional killings.

593 If a daughter runs away from her husband (the father's waku), the
606 father with the aid of his sons brings the runaway back to his waku. She receives a beating from him and is advised to remain faithful to her husband. Quarreling daughters who are the wives of one man are instructed by their father to live in peace, for he considers the welfare of his waku of the greatest importance. He and her brothers
[551] also keep his daughter's totemic name for her since she is not allowed to know it.

603 *Marikmo* ⟷ *Maraitcha* (diramo and mielk)* (father's father; father's
602 father's sister ⟷ son's son; son's daughter; brother's son's son; brother's son's daughter)

This relationship conforms to the father-children type, having the same five varieties as found in the bapa-gatu relationship.

* *Diramo*, man, male; *mielk*, woman, female.

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Mutual fidelity is demanded by husband and wife. She is supposed to stay away from all other men, and according to tribal law he is not allowed to cohabit with any women except his wives. Nevertheless, adultery is very common. A woman, if she has not been married before, is supposed to come to her husband sexually untouched. The idea back of this is that she has always been his wife and could therefore not have had physical relations with another man. Frequently women have had intercourse with other dué before starting to live openly with their own husbands. This causes much indignation and usually results in a beating for the girl and a heated quarrel between the husband and the lover, who usually allows the outraged husband to use more vituperation, since the lover and the tribe recognize that he is in the wrong, and it pleases the husband to believe that he has had the better of the argument.

The attitude of the male part of the tribe toward the infidelity of a galle may be seen in the following story believed by the natives. It concerns the father of Danitcha, Danitcha's father's young galle, and her lover. Danitcha is an old man who is still living and belongs to the people along the Murngin borders. It happened when Danitcha was still a fish (unborn), he says, and when his father was a young man. We shall let Danitcha tell the tale.

Back in the bush my father came; he called to his young galle mielk, "Come on, we'll go look for wild honey." The woman went with him. Before this she had had no sexual relations with him. He saw the tracks of a bandicoot going inside a large hollow log. He crawled up to the tree. He said, "Come on, you come on up and look, too. I think we'll catch a bandicoot." She came up. He said, "You squat down with your hands on your knees ready to catch him if he comes out."

The man was lying down pretending to look into the hollow tree's hole, but he was casting his eye up at the girl's vagina. "Oh," he thought, "someone has opened her before, and she's my galle, and I haven't." He knew this because the opening was large. He got up. "I couldn't find anything in there," he said, "I think we'd better go." "Let's go drink some good water," he said. "Where?" "This way at a rock pool that I know about." They went to the rock. It rose straight into the air and was high like the clouds. The rock had a forked stick ladder. It was very long. He climbed up the pole. In the center of the rock was a deep hole that ran through it far down into the earth. It had water in it far below, and it stank with the dead bodies of women who had been untrue to their husbands. He pretended to drink, then came down. "Has it good water?" she asked. "Yes, it's full up. You go up and have a drink. I'll wait for

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The story is told to the women and believed by them. It was recorded at a time when there was much serious talk among the men that two women caught by their husbands in adultery should be sent there. 684 837

If a wife continues to be unfaithful she might be killed by her dué and members of her own family. Usually the dué would depend upon a magician to accomplish this (see Magic, pages 194-206).

A beating is the usual punishment for a wife's adultery. Garawerpa, an old man of the Daiuror clan, put fire on his wives' vaginas, as did Binindaio when their galles copulated with Willidjungo, the medicine man. With the beating goes a severe tongue lashing. An outraged wife who has caught her husband in a sexual relation with another woman resorts to public abuse of her mate for his infidelities. Her obscenity and abuse are usually more proficiently and much more adequately expressed than a husband's. 837 578

At noon one day Bruk Bruk, the young and attractive wife of Lika, who had inherited her from an older brother, accused Djolli, a man from a more distant clan, of trying to seduce her in the bush. A tremendous noise was made in the camp. All the relatives of the parties concerned talked at once, and the two men armed themselves with spears, spear-throwers, and clubs and charged at each other, exchanging curses.

Djolli was angry because he claimed to be falsely accused; and so was Lika because he knew something was wrong, for either his wife had defended her virtue against Djolli, or she had succumbed and then accused him. In either case his self-esteem had been injured. Djolli's wife, an older woman, no longer attractive, stood by, and instead of helping her husband, the usual thing for a wife, screamed at him: "You belong to me. I am your sexual partner. You are like a dog. You are incestuous and sleep with your own mothers and sisters. Why don't you keep your penis where it belongs—in me, not other women?"

The galle has another recourse. She can attack and abuse her husband's mistress. A wife usually feels that it is the other woman's fault anyway.

Balliman, a young man noted for his fighting and dancing abilities, was Mumulaiki's lover, so camp gossip had it. Balliman's wife (he had inherited her), who was much older than he, took her digging stick and, with the aid of much cursing, gave Mumulaiki a thorough thrashing. Both women were in a fainting condition when the fight was stopped by others. Their heads were cut open and they were covered with bruises and cuts.

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837 578 A further variation in the standards a husband and wife apply to each other may be seen in the following account. Here, too, it will be noticed, when dué is not very assertive, galle is on more or less equal terms with him.

Dimala's wife was known about the various tribes as a woman who usually had an affair with some other woman's husband and was not always particular whether these lovers stood in the right relationship of dué to her. Dimala, too, always had a number of affairs. One day his wife abused him for having such relationships. "Yes," he replied, "I've got one woman, and you can do nothing. You've got your lovers—I've got my sweethearts. My head can think two ways. When you stay quietly by me and have no lovers, I'll sit quietly by you and have no sweethearts."

Such an understanding between spouses is most unusual and considered somewhat asocial. Ordinarily a husband would feel it his duty to beat his wife when she conducted herself in an unlawful way with another man.

Dimala, too, would have felt it necessary to beat his wife and condemn her for the act if she had been caught openly fornicating with someone. Tribal feeling would have driven him to it if his pride had not.

837 588 Five varieties of extra-legal sexual relations between men and women are recognized as possible, i.e., the tribe would not condemn them as unpardonable offenses against customary law: (1) relations when the legal spouse of either or when both spouses are carrying on an affair without the mate's full knowledge; (2) runaway matches when the man and woman go to a distant clan to live—usually a true love match, but not always; (3) a union when a man steals a woman from her husband and takes her to his own clan; (4) a union when warring clansmen kill off the husbands of the women and keep them for themselves; and (5) the union of a daughter whose father has given her to a relative without a legal claim to her in another tribe.

Each of the above is considered illegal and condemned by all people, yet each is practiced to a considerable degree among all the tribes in this region, and each frequently leads to a permanent union that has full tribal recognition.

837 In the first type of liaison the man and woman usually meet in the bush for a lovers' assignation, which always means sexual intercourse. A man ordinarily would choose a galle for such affairs, and a woman a dué; but they occur between momo and kaminyer, little arndi and

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831 The woman's attitude will be illustrated under the head of runaway unions.

836 If a man had a sweetheart in his early youth and the affair terminated after he had acquired his proper mates, he must always feed 514 her if she comes to his camp, and she must always feed him if he goes to hers. Wives, however, always complain and cause trouble for the 578 man who tries to follow this custom because of their jealous fear that he may return to the affair. They are anything but hospitable to a husband's former sweetheart who visits their camps. An understanding husband will allow hospitality, particularly if he and his wife's former lover are good friends and if there has been no early trouble between the two. Otherwise, the husband, too, would forbid a wife to feed her former paramour.

836 Lovers' unions often develop into permanent ones. If there is a dis- 584 pute about a girl between two young men, one of whom has been 583 living with her, it is likely that, all else being equal, the lover would get the girl, for, say the old men, "They were sweethearts." If the woman should be given to the other man, the lovers frequently run away, and the tribe later recognizes the union.

837 A number of customs are connected with sweethearting. At night the husbands generally make their wives sit in their own camps. A favorite time for the assignation of lovers, therefore, is during the day when the women are accessible out in the bush and mangrove jungle, where they gather bulbs and shellfish—in groups for companionship and for fear of being stolen. The young man sneaks up near her and taps a stone on the ground. The woman is on the alert and knows what this means. She tells her companions that she is thirsty, or with some other excuse slips away to join her lover.

Sometimes a man has a woman's friend—always a woman—drop a certain type of string in the loved one's basket. If the woman belongs to the Yiritja moiety and the man to the Dua he puts an opossum fur string into it; if he is Yiritja and she Dua, he uses a red parrot feather string. This, of course, occurs only after he feels fairly confident that his advances will have a favorable reception. She replies through her woman friend, and arrangements are made for a time and place.

578 The following is an account of the operation of this custom, its 837 failure, the feelings of the relatives involved, and the general camp scene during trouble over adultery. Such camp brawls are not infre-

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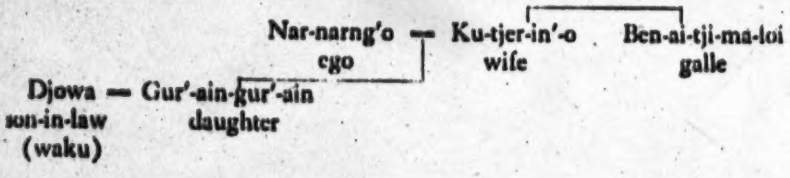
quent and play a prominent part in Murngin life. The following genealogy is necessary to understand the happenings:



Djowa had been away from home looking for kangaroo. He came home and while looking for tobacco discovered an opossum string in his wife's basket. Since his wife was Dua and the string had no red parrot feathers on it, his suspicions were not aroused. He was living, however, with his father-in-law, an older man by the name of Narnarngo. The latter's wife Kutjerino was Yiritja and her basket was hung beside that of the other woman. Narnarngo immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was Kutjerino the lover's string was meant for, and that her paramour had made a mistake and put the opossum string into the wrong basket. He was particularly sensitive to any such attempt, not only because of a volatile temperament that always had him in trouble, but also because recently one of his wives had been stolen. He accused Kutjerino. "To whom does this belong?" She replied, "I don't know." After questioning her for some time with no results, he approached Kutjerino's galle, Benaitjimaloi's wife, who was notorious for the number and frequency of her affairs, and accused her of placing the string in the basket. She informed him it was Bengaliwe's string, but denied placing it there.

Narnarngo began cursing Bengaliwe and accusing him of an affair with his wife, but not in his presence. A near relative of Bengaliwe heard Narnarngo's comments and rushed up to the men's camp, where he told Bengaliwe what the old man had been saying. The accused did not take the charges seriously, and went unarmed to Narnarngo's camp. When he was shown the opossum string he admitted it was his, but said that he had made it to wear around his head (opossum strings are usual ornaments). Narnarngo said that Bengaliwe was lying and had tried to fornicate with his wife.

Meanwhile another quarrel had developed in the camp because a father thought one of the black magicians was trying to kill his daughter. This second dispute developed into a general camp brawl in which Balliman, a near relative of Bengaliwe's, took part. He loved a fight for the sheer joy of exercising proficiency in battle. When his own fight had more or less quieted down, although all the participants were still excited, Balliman heard Narnarngo once again call Bengaliwe various profane terms, but not within the hearing of the latter. He went to the accused and told him.

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578 837 "Let us go back and fight him," he said. The two took their spears and went. "Why do you keep on saying I try to lie with your wife? I didn't." Narnarngo called Bengaliwe "deindumeiu" (big testicles). Bengaliwe replied by calling Narnarngo "golitchirtommeru" (big kidneyed). Both terms designate a man who would break all laws of sexual behavior.

When Benaitjimaloi heard the quarrel he came over with his four brothers and stood back of Narnarngo to help him. He is true galle to Narnarngo. Other near male relatives joined each side and a new camp brawl was in progress. No one was killed or very much hurt in the fight that followed. It was later ascertained that a small boy, unaware of the string's significance, had taken it out of Bengaliwe's and placed it in Djowa's wife's basket.

837 43 Sometimes a woman attempts to seduce a young man into joining her for a lovers' assignation. She usually starts by sending him food. After these presents have been given for a while and he is sure of their meaning, he usually tells the woman who brings them for her friend to tell the other woman where he will meet her. If they have an assignation, he usually makes presents to her. Sometimes young men are so bashful that it takes much persuasion to force them into such a union.

583 837 626 628 A runaway marriage differs from a union caused by a man's stealing a woman in that the woman gives her consent; such an arrangement has the consent of neither her people nor his; whereas in the case of theft, a man's own people frequently support him, particularly if there has been hard feeling between the two clans and a conscious rivalry for the women of certain groups. The runaway union usually ends in his and her people attempting to send her back to her true dué, because it would lead to armed trouble between the man's people and the members of the right dué's clan, and also for the woman's people if they did not condemn the act by helping the true dué regain his wife. However, no man's clan would desert him in such a situation to the point of allowing him to be killed or attacked by the injured man's group. Ordinarily, such a situation ends in a "growling" match, in which the two sides stand armed behind the two opponents, the lover allowing the injured husband to have the better of the cursing. Sometimes such a runaway marriage leads to permanent union.

583 837 After a couple have been lovers for some time they may be so fond of each other as to risk everything and leave their own kin and go to a distant clan. Her people, the husband's gawel and galle, immediately help the injured spouse to regain his wife. The people of their groups

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586 union is illustrated by the action of two former lovers when the man, to obtain tribal recognition of his taking the woman to wife, walks into the husband's camp and takes her away. The husband always shows fight, but his people on this occasion stop him. There is a considerable interval before the next step, the new couple meanwhile going away to another country. When the three meet again the former husband comes over to their camp, eats with them, and accepts presents of food or the man's totemic emblem, signifying that they are friends, that he recognizes the rights of the new dué and has given up his own. This very seldom happens, for a man's importance in society rests largely on the large number of galle who bear him many children and gather quantities of food during the great tribal ceremonies. It would only occur when he and the old men of his clan had become bored with the actions of the woman and did not wish to kill her.

583 Although many customs, such as the use of a string to bring back or take a runaway woman, apply also to the stealing of women, the 578 latter method of acquiring a woman nevertheless occupies a rather different place in the tribal life and local organization. If a woman is found to be really to blame, there frequently is no further trouble; but if it is believed she has been definitely stolen, difficulties are to be expected. The theft of a man's galle by a member of a rival clan is a recognized method of insulting all the members of the legal husband's clan. The clan into which she is taken consider it wrong but justifiable and it pleases them that their enemies have lost the woman.

Still another method of securing women—by ambush—differs from woman-stealing only in that the husband is first killed; capture is not the object of the fight except as retaliation for an earlier theft of women. The writer has recorded instances of a group of clans acquiring five or six women by this means.

582 The gift of a daughter to a far-off dué has two forms, according to 584 the recognition given it by the tribe. If a gawel has no near waku, he is forced to find a man considerably removed from him in this relationship, and all the people feel that he has done right; but if a gawel has a near waku and gives his daughter to a distant one, the near waku's people feel that they have been treated unfairly. If they are a strong clan they force her return. In any case, there is a feeling of uncertainty about the marriage, and her husband is apprehensive of her being taken away by her near dué. Sometimes a man gains permission from his waku to give his daughter to a distant one, because of a complex of circumstances, such as: (1) the weakness of the near

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593 688 152 at the time that it was to his clan as though she had killed a strong man. Her husband said nothing, but hurried her to a mission on a nearby island to shield her against possible attacks of his own people. He risked being injured himself for this, but he was more concerned for her. This was not merely because of her economic or child-bearing value. He had an older wife, who had borne him a daughter, whom he loved even more than his younger wife; and the older woman was still a sexual mate and a very able food-gatherer. Yet he told me he would have let them kill the old woman, for she was "rubbish," but that he liked the young galle "too much" and he could not let them kill her.

593 578 837 One further instance may be cited. One of Benaitjimaloi's three wives, the oldest, was notorious for her promiscuity. She had not only been beaten by him, but at one time all the people of a camp had thrashed her for her misconduct. Benaitjimaloi had acquired her by a runaway union. She had been caught in a sexual relation with Bindjerpuma. The husband fought the lover and then said to everybody that he was tired of her continual affairs, was through with her, and that she could go where she pleased. Then he gave her a thorough beating. One of the older men in the tribe, and one of the most intelligent, said, "He won't give her away. I see inside his head. He beat her after he said he'd thrown her away; that shows that he likes that woman too much." Benaitjimaloi kept his wife.

595 484 342 462 A man and all his wives live in the same camp. If he is going on a long journey he usually leaves some of them with their parents, taking only one with him. When a house is to be built the women usually construct the ordinary windbreak type, but sometimes a man helps them. The husband brings in the heavy stringy bark for the small, dome-shaped house used by most of the people during the rainy season. The women keep the house clean. It is felt that the house belongs to the man and the women.

595 578 The wives live in a fair degree of amiability, but there is sometimes jealousy over their husband.

Dorng, a man past middle age, but still very active, had three wives, of whom Opossum was the youngest. He complained one day:

"My wives growl at each other all the time. The two old ones are good friends, but they are jealous of Opossum. They say to her, 'Why don't you get another man? This man is our husband. He made our children come. He belongs to us. He doesn't belong to you.' Opossum says, 'Where am I to go? My other dué are too old; I'd be the same as dead if I lived with

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one of them.' The two old ones say, 'Your first man is dead already.'" [Dorng's brother died and he got Opossum through the levirate.] His old wives were very pleasant and kind to him, but Opossum was a scold. "When I want to sleep with one of the old sisters at night," he said, "Opossum won't go to sleep as she should. I wait and wait; sometimes morning comes, and that woman watches and won't go to sleep. All right, I wait no longer. I play with her. When I do, Opossum growls at me. The old sisters go to sleep, but sometimes they laugh at me when I play with Opossum."

When Mahkarolla's gawel and mokul gave him their second daughter, the first daughter, who was his wife, immediately quarreled with her younger sister and asked her what right she had to be sleeping with Mahkarolla, who belonged only to her. The first wife said nothing to the husband about her opposition to her sister. When her parents heard of it they said to their older daughter, "She is just the same as you. You are our daughter and she is our daughter. You have him for a husband, and we have given her to him, and now she has him for a husband. She is your young sister; you'll now have someone to look out for the wood for you, and she can help you gather food." This stopped all criticism, and the two sisters lived together as wives to Mahkarolla with the utmost amiability and friendship.

This is the usual situation in Murngin marriage when two sisters from one family marry a man. The older sister has more power than the younger one. Trouble between wives is only likely when he marries into two clans distant from each other.

A wife has considerable independence. She is not the badly treated woman of the older Australian ethnologists' theories. She usually asserts her rights. Women are more vocal than men in Murngin society. Frequently they discipline their husbands by refusing to give them food when the men have been away too long and the wives fear they have had a secret affair.

Husbands and wives are strongly united through their children, for both are very fond of their offspring and extremely demonstrative in their affection. To a European, the children are almost intolerable in their demands on their parents and those around them.

As an indication of connubial solidarity, the following is presented. A small child had died and been buried. A day or two after this a camp fight developed only a short distance from the child's grave. The voices of the mother and father could be heard above the din, first pleading with the combatants to stop, and then angrily cursing

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of them." This demonstrates clearly the strong bond between these relatives. Sometimes a waku's gawel is not galle to the waku's father except distantly. Obviously, given the above feelings, the gawel-waku relationship adds much to the strength of a clan and at the same time helps prevent trouble between the two groups. 604

If a fight developed, gawel would help waku with the loan of his spears, and, if necessary, by fighting for him. His own sons would also aid his waku, their duć. A waku is taught much of what he knows about fighting and hunting by gawel. If the older man is a magician he also teaches this art to his waku. [868]

Gawel uses waku's property, or vice versa, with the freedom of a brother or father. If gawel's wife is misbehaving, waku tries by indirect threats of death to make her conform to the tribal ideal of conduct. [626]

Sometimes a gawel promises a waku his daughter, the boy makes presents to him for a long period of time, and the gawel then refuses to give him the girl. This means trouble. Strong pressure would usually be put upon the older man to force him to give her to the boy. This might end in an interclan fight, or the waku would probably run away with her. 604 578

Another disappointing situation for waku that occasionally occurs is when a gawel says, "I'll give you the daughters from this wife." The waku makes presents over a period of time, meanwhile watching the woman to see if she is going to bear children. If she is barren or produces only sons he stops making his father-in-law presents and turns his attention to some other gawel. 604 584 431

The Australian aborigine is a most industrious trader. Articles of trade are passed over well-known trade routes for hundreds of miles and through many tribes. The Murngin and their neighbors are no exceptions to this rule. The Ritarngo and the Djinba trade stone spear heads to the seacoast tribes for red ocher and pipe clay, or for wooden spears. Ranga string is exchanged between them, as well as many other articles. The waku-gawel reciprocal is utilized for the trading. All men try to have as many distant waku as they can. Presents are constantly being exchanged between the two, not to acquire material wealth so much as to extend a man's sphere of influence beyond the nearby clans. It pleases a Murngin to have a present sent from a distant people and adds greatly to his social prestige. It also gives him a greater feeling of safety when traveling, to know that he has a waku or gawel with whom he has this trading relationship. Waku and gawel often visit each other and their behavior demonstrates real friendship when they meet. 439 438 604 431 554 574

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core of the whole structure functioning at one time. Starting from the lower left-hand corner, kutara is seen making gifts to ego's waku for his daughters; waku is sending gifts to ego (waku's gawel) for his daughters; ego is performing the same exchange with gawel, while the latter is in a similar position with ego's mari. Thus we see running diagonally throughout the entire kinship system the reciprocation based on the exchange of daughters and compensated for it by gifts, while at the same time new families are being created by the change of the daughter and sister of the older family into the wife and mother of the newly created family (see Chart II).

This same small pattern of behavior (mother's brother ⟷ sister's son) creates other diagonal lines, the two most important of which are the line dumungur ⟷ gurrong ⟷ dué ⟷ bapa ⟷ nati; and the line, kaminyer ⟷ gatu ⟷ galle ⟷ marelker ⟷ natji walker. These lines are also exchanging women for presents, as ego's own line does. To see this clearly, let the reader consider bapa (father) in Chart II as ego, and it will be seen that from dumungur to nati there are people in the same relationship as kutara to mari.

There is always the danger that this reciprocity will be broken; that gawel will allow his daughter to go to another relative than waku; that a series of runaway marriages, wrong marriages, or wife-stealing will break these lateral and diagonal bonds, thereby breaking the relationship system.

Further, the organized antagonism felt by the family whose unity is injured by the removal of a marrying member may result in open conflict that would involve the larger interclan unities, destroying the social structure since its whole basis is the kinship organization.[10]

Custom of the Mir-ri-ri

To discover additional methods for saving the structure from destruction because of asocial actions and to get at the real meaning of some customs that heretofore have appeared inexplicable, let us re-

[10] This organized antagonism which exists between gawel and waku and their respective families is brought out clearly in the myth commonly told of Jabiru and Emu (see Appendix VIII). The attitude of strong solidarity of the daughter toward her father should be noticed; the criteria she applies to her husband in his relations with her father are the normal Murngin ones. The telling of this myth always causes much sorrowful laughter. The events of the first part of the story might easily happen, but the open fighting would not occur. The whole myth gives a series of explanations of how animals took their present form, and it also symbolically expresses the antagonisms and standards that apply for son-in-law and father-in-law.

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open to human occupation by the drying of the land, the burning of the spear grass, and the disappearance of the swarms of vicious insects, these smaller groups coalesce into larger units which may contain as many as thirty or forty people and will contain many more if a large ritual is being celebrated. Every member of this group is related closely to at least one or more other individuals in the group, but to the rest he is only tribally related. Where the sea-turtle eggs on the sand beaches are most plentiful, the oyster beds most prolific and accessible, sea-bird eggs most abundant, lily and yam swamps most productive, and the cycad palm nuts ripened and ready for picking, there will be found the horde groups.

All of the people in the horde will be of friendly clans which are usually closely intermarried; if there are antagonisms they are suppressed or given expression in a peace-making makarata, which allows those involved to remain in harmony. As soon as food is plentiful the better areas usually become locations for the great rituals which take place at this time; the ceremonial life definitely enlarges the size of the horde groups. The camp of the horde is organized spatially in the same way as the clan lands are spatially related to each other.

Ritual sanctions at this time help prevent open strife, which is always a possibility whenever the clans come together. The belief that the totem will be offended if clashes occur between opposing clansmen usually keeps the peace. Ritual sanction, then, is the most powerful force in regulating the peaceful behavior of these larger food-gathering hordes. If it were not for these extreme sanctions the larger hordes could not be formed. Peoples with a background of feud and warfare who might not otherwise risk meeting one another can be fairly certain of peace in a horde gathered for a ritual. Since the local clans which start the ceremony have it well under way and the totemic emblems have been made and are in the camp by the time the first guests arrive, hesitant visitors can feel comparatively safe in coming to the ceremony. The bitterly antagonistic clans, however, who have a continuous blood feud tradition and a record of killing back of them would never be present unless under extreme circumstances, for religious sanctions or peace-making duels would not prevent open strife and possible secret killings between them.

The horde, then, is governed by the seasonal fluctuation of plenty or scarcity, and its extreme in size is effected by the attractive stimuli of important ceremonies.

The usual division of labor obtains during the period of the larger

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CHAPTER VI

WARFARE

WARFARE is one of the most important social activities of the Murngin and surrounding tribes. Without it, Murngin society as it is now constituted could not exist. Any social change consequent upon the loss of the trait would demand a decided alteration in the fundamental structures of the civilization. Warfare prevents modifications in the society that would possibly destroy it.

The tribe is not the war-making group in this society, nor is the moiety. Warfare is as likely to occur within these groups as outside them. The clan, the largest social unit without internal armed conflict, is usually the war-making group. The causes leading to warfare are the killing of a clansman by a member of another clan, and interclan rivalry for women. The latter is the usual cause of a killing. Blood vengeance forces further killings. Clans within a moiety are more likely to be fighting, since clans of the opposite exogamic moieties are not in competition for women. An analysis of battles and killings shows this to be true in most cases, but there are a number of instances in which groups belonging to opposite moieties have been in conflict.

Feuds between clans of opposite moieties are more likely to die out for lack of the stimulus provided by competition for women. Such clans are likely to allow a makarata to be held, where blood is ceremonially shed as repayment for the death of a clansman, in order that the feud may be definitely ended.

It seems a probable hypothesis that one of the fundamental reasons for the creation of a phratry is a drive within the civilization to create social structures intermediate in size between moiety and clan, where open conflict would be taboo, as it is now within clan limits. This feeling is not strong enough to counterbalance the open antagonisms resulting from the struggle for women. The clan structure is too solid and too powerful to yield any of its influence to a larger social institution.

As will be seen later, polygyny is possible under present conditions

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If armed conflict breaks out in a camp where a ceremony is being celebrated, the ritual is usually stopped, either because the participants are afraid to stay, for they may be killed in their sleep, or because the leaders of the ceremony become angry at what they consider an insult to their totems.

It is believed that while a totemic emblem is in camp all fighting should cease, and any infraction of the tribal law is considered a direct insult to the totemic emblem and therefore to the clan. The leader of a Narra ceremony, at which the totemic emblems are used, almost always stops the ritual if there has been any serious infraction of tribal law, because he does not want to accept the consequences of an affront to his totem. It is believed that the totem itself would seek vengeance upon any leader who did not protect its interests at such a time. The writer saw two Narra, a Djungguan, and two Gunabibi ceremonies terminated because of the outbreak of fighting. The two Narra were stopped by the leaders because they said their totems were insulted, the Djungguan and Gunabibi because of the fighters' fear of death and also because of the anger of the leader of the ceremony. Another Narra ceremony was not stopped when a fight followed the catching of two women in adultery by their husbands. The women were thoroughly beaten—less because of the offense itself than because it took place while a great ceremony was being held—and might have been killed but for their escape in the black of night by swimming to a nearby island.

The deliberate stopping of a ceremony demonstrates that warfare and ceremony have clearly antithetical traits. The great ceremonies tend to enlarge the group solidarity both in numbers and in extent of territory and to create a smoothly functioning unit out of a large number of clans, but warfare destroys this unity and reduces the limits of solidarity to the clan.

Since both traits are necessary to the tribe's social organization, a nice periodical balance has been struck; at one period ceremonialism controls the people's activities, and later war is uppermost in the relations of the local groups.

Effects of Warfare on Population

A fairly accurate estimate places the population of this area around three thousand. The genealogical material gathered by the writer shows about an equal number of women and men, with possibly slightly more men than women. This means that there are about fifteen hun-

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view of their totem. This was to put him off his guard; a few days later they ambushed and killed him. 688

If one of the members of a clan breaks a number of the ritualistic taboos he is seldom killed by members of his own clan. Usually the old men arrange for his death by members of another clan. If such offenses went unpunished the whole structure of Murngin society would fall to pieces, since in time the women and children would be aware of the secrets of the men's associations, and with the knowledge common, the ceremonial ideas would lose their significance. 688 696

Should a young man make a totemic emblem without the permission of the clan's ceremonial leader, the usual method of dealing with this insult to the clan would be to kill him. 688

The finding of the first wild bees' nest, because of its magical significance, is a very important matter to a young boy. Should an older man eat any of it or not allow the boy to consume the honey that was found, the father and father-in-law of the boy would start a camp fight with the man's group. 688 628

At the beginning of the dry season all the underbrush is burned off to secure better hunting, frequently destroying a log coffin. The dead man's clan is always offended, but killing seldom results, for the deed is felt to have been accidental, and no strong feeling surrounds the bones of a dead man. 688 673

The use of obscenity and profanity against a man always results in a camp fight. Profanity usually reflects not only on the man but on his clan and carries an incestuous connotation. Occasionally quarrels result from an unfair division of the game killed in the hunt, but not always open warfare, since those who feel they had a right to the game are near relatives whose solidarity is too strong to allow fighting. 578

Adulteries may cause a husband to give only his wife a thorough beating, but usually the lover is also held responsible and a fight is a consequence. The fights are ordinarily of the nirimaoi-yolno (a fight within the camp) type. If the lover attempts to steal her the more serious narrup (secret killing) and mariñgo (night attack on a camp) are used, because wife-stealing is a much more serious offense. 684

A number of customs attend these killings that serve as causes for war. When the body of a man killed in a fight or by magic is disinterred, the finger bones are given both to the near relatives of the victim's clan and to related groups as relics to remind them of their duty of blood vengeance. The relic is wrapped with fiber string and covered with beeswax and parrot feathers. It is placed at the bottom 765 628

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seven by narrup, three by milwerangel, and two by nirimaoi yolno. Although the last is the most frequent type of fight, it seldom results in killings; gaingar, on the other hand, has happened only twice in the last twenty years, yet it has accounted for the deaths of twenty-nine men.

The wooden or stone-headed spear, the spear-thrower and the club, as well as the stone knife, are used in these engagements. The spear is the chief weapon, although in camp fights clubs play a prominent part. The stone axe, which is primarily utilized as an implement, also serves as a weapon. No shield is found here. The Murngin depend on the spear thrower to ward off spears and on their well-developed agility to avoid thrusts. In all fights except the nirimaoi yolno and the narrup, the people coat themselves with war paint of white clay.

Nirimaoi Yolno

Nirimaoi fights are very frequent and are usually the result of quarrels caused by adultery or the husband's belief that someone has been attempting to make him a cuckold. The injured man goes to the camp of the lover and accuses him. He carries a bundle of spears and possibly a club with him. Words follow, swearing starts, and indignation is felt on both sides. Relatives of each contestant help him if the quarrel is felt to be very serious. The women usually attempt to hold the arms of the men to stop the fight from becoming too serious, meanwhile cursing the opponents of their brothers and husbands. At times, however, women pick up their digging sticks or a man's club and help their male relatives; very occasionally a woman is wounded and in certain very rare cases killed.

The nirimaoi yolno fight seldom results in anyone's being killed. Friends of both parties always stand back of the men and hit the spear-throwers or hold them when the fighters attempt to hurl their spears at each other. The contestants usually depend upon this and talk much "harder" (dal) to each other than they would if they knew that they were going to be allowed to have free play at each other. They increase their own sense of importance through the interest of others in their actions and possess a feeling that they are much braver warriors and are filled with a much more intense desire to kill than they would have if no one interfered. By remonstrating with their friends and struggling to get free from them, they are able to vent their outraged emotions and prove to the community that no one can infringe upon their rights without a valiant effort being made to prevent it. Obviously

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on some occasions there is a certain amount of bluff in the conduct of the contestants. The writer observed one nirimaoi yolno fight when, for some unaccountable reason, the contestants' friends did not attempt to hold them. They had counted on being restrained when they rushed at each other while hurling threats of death and covering each other with obscenity and profanity. When they reached each other no clubs were wielded or spears thrown; the men stood breast to breast and obviously felt a bit ridiculous. The usual results of the nirimaoi yolno are a few bruises, much obscenity, many threats, but few killings.

It must be borne in mind that members of a camp usually come from several clans, or fighting would never take place. Although the clan is undoubtedly involved in this variety of battle, the fight is almost always an individual affair, with a few of the combatants' relatives joining the fray. The nirimaoi yolno is also used as a kind of debate where angry men may air their fancied or actual grievances and state their position in controversial matters. This latter function is very important and is in most cases the primary basis of the nirimaoi yolno.

Narrup or Djawarlt

The narrup generally results in someone's being killed or badly injured. It is one of the most deadly forms of Murngin warfare for it occurs at night and by stealth. It is usually conducted by a few individuals who may be members of one clan, or by a party composed of members of one's own clan, the mother's clan, and the wife's group. Such relatives as gawel, waku, dué, galle, bapa, gatu, maraitcha, and marikmo are frequently members of this type of expedition.

The success of the narrup depends upon surprise. A man is usually attacked while sleeping. Warlumbopo's slaying of his brother's killer at Blue Mud Bay, Maiangula's killing of Kamata, and Natjimbui's killing of the Marderpa man in the feud described in this chapter are examples of the narrup night attack.

Although the narrup may be an individual affair, the entire clan is held responsible for the killing. The young men usually attempt to gain the sanction of their elders for a maringo expedition but do not feel they need to for the narrup, which is therefore a favorite fighting method. At times an old man may prefer to remain in the background and have a young man do his killing so that he will not be held as the one primarily responsible, and because of his desire for secrecy the other old men of the clan would not be consulted. The "pusher"

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628 887 they are in the wrong. When the old men of the injured clan feel that they have sated their anger as a group they call out to the young men to stop, and each man then throws singly at the killers. He may throw as long as he pleases.

628 535 When this part of the ceremony has been completed, the whole offending group dances up to the other, and one of the latter jabs a spear through the thighs of the killers. If this happens it means that no further retaliatory action will be taken. The killers can feel free to go into the country of their enemies without fear of injury. If only a slight wound is made the offenders know they are not forgiven and the truce is only temporary. Sometimes no wound is made at all. This acts as a direct statement of the offended clan's intention to wreak vengeance on the other side.

After the wound has been made the two sides dance together as one group to prove their feeling of solidarity and to express ritually that they are not openly warring groups, but one people. They also perform the usual water dance.

628 The above is the idealized form of the makarata. If all goes well, this procedure is followed through until the end, and the makarata's purpose is fulfilled. The following things can happen to turn the makarata into a real fight: (1) the old men may not have enough power to keep their young men in control; (2) the offending side may start swearing or throwing spears, which immediately turns the whole performance into a fight; (3) one of the runners may be badly wounded, which is likely to stimulate his clan members to attack the other side; (4) treachery may be resorted to; (5) the accidental wounding of an outsider may sometimes result; and (6) a member of either side may deliberately throw a spear into the other group because he is anxious to start a general fight.

Women's Fights

578 Brawls in which only women are engaged are fairly frequent. The fights usually take place between two women, almost always because a young woman has seduced another's husband. Occasionally more than two women are involved, sisters taking sides with their kin; or several wives of one man may attack his sweetheart, in which case the latter usually calls upon her own relatives for help. The women's ironwood digging sticks are the usual weapons, although if a man's club is within reach the women often use it. They strike each other on the head. The fights are of such intensity that bloodshed always results.

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154 "The man slept two nights. The third day he got up and went to the Burera country near Cape Stewart. Ilkara was here at the Mission. The wife of Marawa had been a sweetheart of Ilkara's before she had become Marawa's wife. Ilkara wanted her now. I followed Marawa from the Mission. Ilkara took three of his maris and one of his wakus. They didn't know I had killed Marawa with magic.

"They followed him and came up on his left side. One of them threw a spear. He raised his arm to knock it off but the spear went to the place where I had opened him. He was kneeling down when they sneaked up on him. He stood up when he was hit. He stood still. He did not try to run, he did not try to raise his spear-thrower to protect himself, he did nothing. He did not try to throw his spear, for when a man is killed by magic he can do nothing.

"Ilkara's mari hooked up his spear to his spear-thrower and threw it. Marawa did not move, but stood like a tree. He fell over and died. After he died another mari speared him in the back. Ilkara took Marawa's woman."

578 *Ka-per-ar-a, Sister of Bomlüjirli and Wife of Dorng.*—"I killed her because she and Dorng had promised Waryi Waryi a tomahawk, but instead of giving it to him they gave it to Jerrimerrili. This made Waryi Waryi very angry. He told me and asked me to kill this woman. I was at the Mission. That woman went to look for palm nuts. I told everyone I was going to look for kangaroo. Before this Waryi Waryi and I had planned how it would be done. Waryi Waryi went to sleep at the well on the other side of Millingimbi Island, and I was to stay on this side and we were to meet halfway.

"I had only gone part way when I saw this woman. I followed her for a long distance. She was walking toward the other side of the island. There were a number of women with her. When they got well into the bush the party broke up and went in different directions. She went by herself.

"Waryi Waryi was coming the other way. He had a dog with him and was catching bandicoot. The dog was helping him. I followed the woman. I had a fish spear with me. I sneaked up to within a few feet of her and threw the fish spear through the calf of her leg.

"She screamed, 'Ya-kai! Ya-kai! Ya-kai!' I jumped and grabbed her from behind. She became very frightened but I held her. I put my foot against her Mount of Venus. She changed until she felt as if she were dead.

"Waryi Waryi came up closer. He looked at us. He thought that she and I were having sexual intercourse. When I saw him I was a very little frightened. I walked a little distance away and fell down on my knees and tried to crawl away, but Waryi Waryi called out, 'Don't be afraid, I'll come help you.'

"I told him to fix her up because it was his job, while I made a fire to

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OI17 Murngin OI17

Marriage and Relationship

578 595 In the social life of the people polygamy is generally practised, some men having as many as eight wives. While a good deal may be said in justification of this practice among a nomadic people, such as these aborigines are, it is a very fruitful cause of trouble and strife. This is occasioned by the jealousy which older wives frequently feel toward their younger tribal [589] sisters, and also by the fact that, because of this system, many young men of marriageable age are unable to obtain partners. This latter fact, not unnaturally, leads to the stealing of women and general breaches of the moral laws of the tribe.

562 627 672 684 One, to us, highly unjust custom is to punish a woman who has been stolen, even though she has been taken away by force, much more severely than the man who has stolen her. In most cases she is, when recovered, badly speared or beaten, in some cases so severely treated as to be killed, while the man who has taken her, unless he occupy a prohibited relationship to the woman, is usually let off with a severe lecturing.

627 684 Generally all the relatives of the wronged husband who are present will join in this brutal chastisement of the woman, their action being justified by the fact that they "feel sorry" for their fellow-tribesman. Perhaps experience has proved the value of this method of controlling domestic relationships.

582 584 Marriage, as previously indicated, is regulated by the social organisation of the tribe. There are only certain men of the opposite moiety who are eligible to become the husband of any particular girl or woman. To one of these men the girl is given in infancy, and, though this man has nothing directly to do with her until she reaches the age of puberty, he is required, during the years of her infancy and girlhood, to fulfil certain obligations, such as the making of presents of food, weapons or utensils, to her father.

[585] Because of this custom, there is nothing approaching a ceremony of marriage among these people, the girl during infancy as really belonging to the man as she will later on when he actually 587 takes her to wife. When a man dies, his wife or wives immediately 768 pass over to one or more of his tribal brothers, so that, excepting in the case of a few very old women, there are no widows, and there are no orphans in this aboriginal community.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OI17 Murngin OI17

Magical Beliefs

[578] 754 A profound belief in magic enters very largely into the life of these people, and is a very fruitful cause of tribal quarrels and killings. The most important of these beliefs concerns magical killings by sorcerers known as "Ragalk."

According to this belief, the Ragalk, having selected his victim, or having been commissioned by another to bring about the death of a certain individual, waits until he finds this man alone, out hunting or passing between camps, and, seizing him, soon reduces him to a condition of unconsciousness. Then, making a deep incision into the thorax, he thrusts in his hand and squeezes all the blood out of the victim's heart and other organs. The blood is caught in paper-bark baskets, and allowed to dry, and is later partaken of by the Ragalk and his companions. These are usually two or three younger men being instructed in this art of magical killing. Having secured the blood, the Ragalk, by an elaborate process, hides all traces of the operation and restores the victim to consciousness and normal life, so that he returns to camp entirely unaware of what has taken place. Before releasing him, the Ragalk determines how long the victim shall live, which may be for several weeks, and by what means he shall actually die. He may determine that the man shall die from snake-bite, or be speared, or taken by a shark or crocodile, but, whatever happens, it is the Ragalk who is really responsible for the person's death.

682 761 Among these people there is no belief in death from natural causes, so that every death is believed to be the result of evil magic, and steps are immediately taken to determine who is responsible for it. The number of men who are believed to possess this magical power is limited, so it is usually a matter of determining which one of a comparatively small number is guilty. This is done by methods which are utterly unscientific, but which are thoroughly convincing to the aboriginal mind. In this way tribal quarrels and vendettas are begun and continued, and practically every death is followed by a violent upheaval of the tribal life.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER 2

THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

142 Who are the people of Arnhem Land? What is the pattern of their life, the background against which these events took place?

The physical characteristics of the Australian Aborigines as a whole are well known – their chocolate-brown skin, wavy hair, slightly prognathoid features and rather broad nostrils. The people of the Arnhem Land coast show some differences from those of the immediate inland and of the centre. Food of all kinds is more plentiful, and fresh water easier to find; and so they are rather more solidly built, with heavier legs and broader shoulders than the "desert" natives. Their skin appears to be darker, al- [144] though here and there are lighter individuals who show the influence of part-Malayan or Macassan descent. Generally speak- [152] ing, they are lively and excitable and show emotion more readily 578 than their southern neighbours; all along this coast the tribes have a long history of "blood feuds", kept up between one family and another, or among various clans. They prefer to dispose of their enemies by open killings rather than by the secret work of magical spells – although these too, it is said, are freely employed.

105 Since on this fertile coast the Aborigines do not have to exert themselves quite so strenuously as those in more barren and inhospitable regions, they can devote more time to material culture – to weapons, cave and bark paintings, and a wide range of sacred objects. For this reason, too, we find numbers of clan and tribal groups within a comparatively small area. Tribal territories are more restricted than in the semi-desert areas where men and women must be almost continuously on the move in their search for food.

which goes on. But while these obligations impose a heavy burden, especially upon a young man who must attend a long series of ceremonies with a vista of payments to be met, the ceremonies in turn confer some benefit upon him, although this may be indirect. They carry increased social status and prestige which in turn bring gradual liberation from some of the irksome tabus which influence almost every act of a young man.

Although on these occasions the immediate burden of gathering vegetable food falls on his female relatives, especially upon his mother and sisters, this does not relieve the initiate of his own personal obligations, but rather intensifies them. He must now redouble his efforts in hunting to enable him in turn to supply his women relations with fish, kangaroo, "sugar bag" or wild honey, in order to retain their goodwill. A man's success as a hunter depends not only on his ability to stalk and his skill with the spear but also on his capacity to make, and to maintain in serviceable condition, his hunting weapons, his fishing lines and nets and sometimes also a canoe. So initiation, especially initiation into the jealously-guarded clan totems (*mărdai'in*) of the small groups which characterise the social organisation of North-eastern Arnhem Land, with their intense solidarity and quick resentment,[19] sets up a long train of social obligations—each with a definite economic import—each requiring gift and counter gift, and furnishing the motive for work, the urge for production both of food and *gerri*.

[19] Just as generous presentations of *gerri* (material wealth) and *yătu* (food) promote goodwill, so tardiness in the discharge of these obligations may lead to avenging expeditions and interclan feuds. A man who is unpopular, or who is notorious for his carelessness in these matters is more likely to be named as the victim when a scapegoat is sought to avenge a death or wrong.

421 for giving, for possession, the fine shades of distinction which are drawn between each type of gift or exchange, as well as the strict recognition of the rights of a man to use and dispose of his own property, all lay stress on this. No man would think of using the weapons or personal possessions of another without specific permission. To do [578] [685] so would lead inevitably to a fight. But there are a few well-421 defined exceptions to this rule which occur in some special 426 relationships within the kinship system, where behaviour 602 is marked by much freedom, and in which relatives of certain orders (*vide infra*) borrow one another's *gerri* without permission and without any fear of resentment or reprisal. These examples are exceptional and are associated with a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by extreme licence, contrasting strongly with the rigid tabu which marks certain other relationships, particularly that between mother-in-law and son-in-law, and only to a slightly lesser extent, between brother and sister.

578 Theft is regarded very seriously among these people, and 685 I have heard altercations raging when boys or young men from the single men's camp had stolen vegetable food belonging to women, while it was still in course of preparation. Violent abuse, leading to a general fight in camp, often results even from such minor theft, and large expiatory payments of food would be made by the close relatives of the offenders to avert more serious consequences.

421 These facts stress the recognition of the individual owner-602 ship of property. This is emphasised also by the special feature which is made of the right of *kutara* (sister's daughter's son) to take or borrow possessions of a *mari* (mother's mother's brother) with whom a special "joking relation-

MORE RARELY, RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEED-
[465] ing the canoe-maker is assured by the man for whom the
396 work is undertaken. He is paid finally in *gerri*, such as bundles
431
437 of spears, baskets and tomahawks, which again take the form of "goodwill" (*ŋoi ŋämmatirri*) presents rather than payments calculated on the basis of exact economic equivalence. In these transactions, a bargain is rarely struck; the *djärtunmirri* is flattered by the request for his services to cut the canoe, and the *buŋgauwa lippa lippa*, the owner or master of the canoe, seeks to please the craftsman by making liberal gifts to ensure that the *djärtunmirri* is satisfied at
[152] the end of the transaction. For he knows that a man who
[578] harbours resentment will rarely declare this openly, but
[754] that he is likely to brood over it and eventually to seek the aid of a medicine man or sorcerer to avenge the wrong, real or imaginary. Even in this case, to which the name *mälli* is applied, the transaction is far removed from the level of simple purchase. But a big advance has been made in the recognition of craft specialisation and the idea of payment for the work of the specialist.

313 The responsibility of the owner, *buŋgauwa* (literally
396 master) of the canoe, does not end here. A suitable canoe tree is hard to find and he may be obliged to select a tree some distance from river or sea, and to manhandle the heavy craft on rollers cut for the purpose.

431 The handling and launching of a new canoe is a big
476 ceremonial occasion, and in consequence, a presentation of
396 food is expected of the *buŋgauwa* as a gesture of goodwill to those who assist in the launching of the craft. This again entails work and organisation, and above all, the co-operation of numbers of people, including women, with divergent interests, the whole forming part of an intricate and nicely balanced system of obligation and counter obligation, of gift and counter gift.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

5.

THE CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE IN ARNHEM LAND

When a newcomer in Arnhem Land settles down among the people, he quickly becomes familiar with the material culture and technology and is struck by the localised and restricted nature of the distribution of certain elements and minor traits and even of technological materials, and by the extreme conservatism of the people.

In the case of certain elements—in particular, the *mintji*, the magnificent patterns in polychrome, the totemic designs which are the hereditary property, the "copyright", of a group called by these people, *barpuro*, (a clan or an aggregation of clans, linked by the possession of common totemic ancestors)—this is understandable. Anything, whether social or material, which touches the solidarity of these closely-integrated groups, is jealously guarded, and its infringement bitterly resented and quickly avenged.[31] So that prudence, as well as conservatism, plays a part in restricting

[31] Sometimes this may be averted by expiatory or conciliatory payments of food or *gerri* to appease the injured or offended sentiments of the individual or group, which serve to restore a state of *euphoria* or ritual goodwill. But these presentations are invariably carried out in a ritual or ceremonial manner which gives them the stamp of formal approval of the society acting as a group and so lifts them above the level of mere personal or private feuds.

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

Wongar men, things would have been different. Both the men and the women were Dua. They were incestuous. It was like a brother and sister being together. Those two sisters left that country, one pregnant and the other menstruating. If they had not done this, this cycle would never have happened. Everyone and all plants and animals would have stayed single. But after the Wawilak sisters had done this they made it the law for everyone (pages 250-251). 159 581 828 773 825

When I was a small boy I walked about single. One day my gawel came to me and said, "Look at me. I am your gawel. You must give me kangaroo and turtle and spears. By and by I will give you my gatu mielk" (pages 93-98). 159 431 582 583

I gave him spears and spear-throwers, hair belts, and all kinds of food because he would give me his daughters. When I first started making presents to him for my wife, my younger brothers all helped me. By and by, when they get ready to have a wife, I shall help them make presents to their gawels. My gawel gave my father presents of spears and food, and he also gave my arndi presents because I was her son and because she is my gawel's sister.

We like our wives' fathers very much. Suppose my gawel and my father quarrel and suppose they fight. I can do nothing. I cannot help my father. I cannot help my father-in-law. I must do nothing. They are all the same to me. I must try to stop any fight. 159 606

All men try to get plenty of wakus in other countries. This is because they send presents to their gawels. They send things that aren't in this country. This country, where we are now, has no stone. Relatives here send presents to the Ritarngo country for stone spear heads. They send bamboo to the Goyder River people for it. Some others have no white clay and they send to other countries for it. Fathers-in-law and sons-in-law are the people who do this (pages 95-96). 159 431 604 606

Sometimes a no-good gawel promises his daughter to three wakus. All these "half" sons-in-law give presents to him. They all think they are going to get that girl. By and by one gets her. This means a big row. The other two want to fight this lucky one, and they always fight the father of the girl because he has been two-faced. They think this gawel maybe is a little bit crazy. Sometimes two or three boys, when they are all trying to get a girl, see that her father is no good and they all quit. 159 578 604

When a man marries a woman his father-in-law tells him to take good care of her. When a man has two daughters from his father-in-law, sometimes the old man comes and says to him, "It is better that I give your younger brother this next girl." The older brother says, "Yes, you tell him 159 584

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

your head, and his nose has a ridge like yours. I never noticed before just how much he resembles you, especially when he walks and swings his elbows. He's a splendid lad.'

Naratjin was amusing his small son beside his windbreak in the cool of the day, when Maulin, a man from another horde and moiety, spoke thus to him from the door of his hut. Nomads are extraordinarily susceptible to praise and readily respond to what we would call flattery. But Naratjin was delighted at what he had heard and set about preparing the customary present of food for the flatterer. He painted his son with coloured clay and decorated him with armlets and corslet of string and bird feathers, and took him to visit Maulin. Looking up and seeing the child in all his glory, the flatterer expressed his pleasure before graciously accepting the present. At first I suspected the flatterer of 'singing for his supper', but this somewhat rare form of praise is genuine; it is spontaneously given in public, and Yulengor who may be sitting near by courteously lower their voices whilst the 'toast' is proposed.

A carefully preserved etiquette governs the distribution of food. Choice parts of the kill, such as back legs and loins, go to the old men, before the rest is divided according to the age and importance of those present. Generally the meal proceeds peacefully, and each hunter receives his share with a studied indifference which is under careful control, for the greatest importance is attached to good food.

Quarrels can arise from the unfair distribution of food, as when Jaua brought in a kangaroo to share with his brothers and an old man of the Ngaimil horde, and the Ngaimil elder quickly muttered an incantation over it, declaring that he had thereby made it sacred to his Ngaimil totem. By his act, the old man made it possible for him to eat the meat but impossible for the youth who had killed the animal to

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

touch it, or for his brothers to do so either. The night was hideous with their quarrelling, and though the brothers attacked the old man with their spear-throwers, he loudly proclaimed the tabu and the youths dared not eat the meat.

Sexual intercourse is accepted as a natural function, not to be affected by proximity to the family circle or to other families camped a few feet away, nor yet by occasional unseemly interest from the young men's camp. Even in east Arnhem Land, where a strict morality is outwardly enforced, intercourse is little less than promiscuous, and it is not to be wondered at that most youths laughingly admit their *affairs d'amours*, and that women frequently make the initial advance—though secretly for fear of their husbands.

To prevent irregularities, married men enforce a number of prohibitions, and unmarried and unattached men are segregated in a camp by themselves at a reasonable distance from any family. A woman is not allowed to eat food presented to her husband by a youth, in case he should consider her to be under an obligation to him, and if a youth wishes to share his food with a married brother, he must not go to his camp but must call him over and give it to him.

In many relationships it is unlawful for a man and woman to greet each other, and when I have asked for a name, I have often been greeted by evasion or silence, simply because no one present was allowed to utter the name. Brothers and sisters may not look at each other when speaking, but talk with averted faces. A man converses freely with his wife, mother, daughter, granddaughter, and niece; but when speaking to other relatives he averts his face, and not being able to call them by name he draws their attention by an ejaculation or by saying: 'I wish to

15;Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

192 [197] and a school-teacher becomes 'rorm-gurrpan-a-mirry'. Aboriginal dialects are picturesque, and the same terms are used for objects possessing some similarity; thus, twenty or more names for parts of the body are used for trees and geographical formations. A backbone is the same as a mountain chain; the nose on men, animals, and fish is the same as a peninsular, a cape, or the bow of a boat or canoe; arms, wings, limbs of trees, and tributary streams are all called 'werrna'. A main river stream is called throat. Wounds and sores are classed with holes in utensils, canoes, huts, or clothing.

When human conditions resemble natural phenomena, this process is reversed, and the adjective blunt, 'dumuk', is used for a bush track through thick scrub; a man, too, may be 'blunt' or dull of hearing or intellect and understanding; the word is also in everyday use to describe a blunt axe or knife. Hollow logs or burial posts are 'dupun', and in a mild form ●[578] of abuse a nomad may be called 'dupun' or empty-headed.

103 Scores of appropriate place-names occur throughout the country, but it is not surprising that there are also hundreds of other euphonious names having no particular significance, for along the coast and on the countless bush tracks, every waterhole, swamp, hill, river crossing, and ancient camp site has a name. 'Rungi' could be a falling tide, low tide, or an exposed beach, and there are many coastal names linked with rungi. West Arnhem Land is known for its low lying [133] swamps and mudflats, but in the north-east there is a startling change to clean, sandy beaches with bold headlands, and the latter area is called 'Rungi-Poingar'—'the place of [361] beaches'. Most camps are made on beaches or sandy patches in the bush, but a horde in Blue Mud Bay haunts an outcrop of stone and clay far out on a mangrove mud flat, and consequently their camp is known as 'Lokor-Poingar'—'the place of feet'; and the reference is to the spreading mangrove roots or feet.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

LANGUAGES, SIGNS AND SMOKE-SIGNALS

From Cape Wilberforce to Arnhem Bay the ruggedness 103
of the coastline is exceeded only by the precipitous bluffs [133]
of the English Company's Islands near by, and the whole
area is known as 'Bwartaba' or 'rocky country', 'wartaba'
being the name for rocks. Cape Grey is a prominent head-
land in the Gulf of Carpentaria and is called 'Bokorral',
'bokor' referring to the cliff-face and also to the human
forehead.

Names for birds are sound-perfect imitations of bird calls. 192
A crow is known by the raucous 'warrk', and native-
companions making a noise resembling a low-toned gargle
are called 'gorral-kor'. The brown pheasant calls pleasantly
on several clipped notes and is known as 'bukbuk'.

Pithy sayings are in common use, and the best known have 195
English equivalents. 'Mata-rang' is a man who never
wanders far from his horde territory, or, when infrequently
visiting distant friends, is for ever anxious to return home;
literally he is a stick-in-the-mud. The term is also given to
an adolescent who finds his mother's company preferable
to that of boys of his own age and who follows her when she
hunts for food.

If a man comes into a friendly camp and wishes to pass on [521]
important news, he waits for a lull in the conversation, and
remarks cryptically: 'When the tide goes out, have a look
on the beach and you will find something.' His hearers are
instantly alert and make an opportunity for him to tell his
story. There seem to be trouble-makers in every camp,
with their accusations, rumours, and quarrels, and in [578]
exasperation they may be told to 'Get out and camp by
yourself till the wind cleans your hair'.

Stone Age man has an extensive sign-language or semi- 201
ology, and I accumulated a vocabulary of over two hundred
simple signs for common customs, names, questions, in-
structions, and relationships. Sign-terms are generally
imitations of the subject referred to; when making the sign

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

wives are often sisters—a relationship which is likely to be favourable to very young wives, who often are no more than ten or twelve years of age when married and go to live with their older sisters. More than likely, the mother will later follow them to the outskirts of the new family circle; there to sit by her own small fire and to be suffered in silence by her son-in-law. Young wives are married as children and are regarded by the husband almost as nieces. Older wives, according to their disposition, may treat these children kindly or force them to hew and carry and attend their whims. Older women give the younger ones rigid training in wifely duties, and the arrangement often works out happily. I have seen young wives, and old ones too, cry without restraint when they have been unable to accompany the husband on a hunting trip.

It has been said that aboriginal women are treated with constant brutality and that they play an unimportant role in the decisions of the horde. This is not so, although a wife is at the disposal of her husband and the tone of her existence depends upon his character. Stone Age woman's life is hard, like that of all Stone Age nomads, but her influence is much more important than is popularly imagined. Women join in all camp disputes—indeed, with their gossip they often cause them—and their voices can be heard above the din of shouting men and howling dogs. In peace-making ceremonies they taunt the offenders, abusing them and brandishing digging-sticks in their faces, and they urge their sons either to make peace or destroy the offender. I have seen several peace-making ceremonies collapse because women urged their men to attack the offenders who were suing for peace.

In rare instances termagants control their families and sons' families by criticizing, nagging, and threatening. Late one day I came out of the bush to a camp where Yakangaiya and his married sons were sitting quietly in

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

562 groups by their fire, cooking fish and waiting for their wives
598 and mothers to come with food and firewood. For an hour
or more Damilipi, the oldest of Yakangaiya's wives, partially blind, stark naked, and switching flies with a bunch of twigs, strode up and down haranguing and insulting her men, accusing them of cowardice and laziness in not raiding their
[628] hereditary enemies and continuing a feud which was dying by mutual consent. Damilipi's campaign was continued for two days, and as other women joined her the horde was roused to the point of organizing a killing party. Weeks later the men attacked, and in the reprisals two of Damilipi's sons and a daughter-in-law were killed.

583 Wives may be acquired by bestowal, by the passing on of
[582] widows, or by theft or capture. Bestowal is the most frequent method, and tribal law provides that a woman must marry her father's sister's son or, should this be impracticable, an equally well-defined alternate husband is provided. Relationships are ageless, and if there are no women in the right marriage-relationship a man not infrequently remains a bachelor till a woman is captured or an elderly widow is available.

Peculiarities result from the practice of bestowal, in that a man does not acquire a mother-in-law by marrying her daughter, but conversely he marries a daughter because her mother has always been his mother-in-law. Several brothers may have the same mother-in-law, who may not have enough daughters for them all, and this gives rise to the practice of promising even an unborn wife to a prospective husband. 'Inipi' is a rite whereby an acceptable son-in-law takes the sebum from his cheek by the side of his nose and anoints the abdomen of his mother-in-law, sometimes while she is still in her infancy, and thereafter all her children come under the special care of the son-in-law, who makes presents to her sons and marries her daughters. By the Inipi rite, one of several brothers may have prior claims and obtain several

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

must memorize the design. Blank spaces on maraian are due to the artist's loss of memory, and they freely admit that they have forgotten some parts of the design.

As well as having a link with the distant Woolen River, the Reratjingo had its own totem centre near Port Bradshaw, and were co-guardians with the Kalpu. But this did not guarantee unity, for the question of guardianship led to quarrels in which several were killed and the Reratjingo withdrawing to Melville Bay forty miles away. But the Kalpu victory was short lived, for in driving off the Reratjingo they so weakened the home-front, that their hereditary enemies, the Juppu of Blue Mud Bay, descended on them with such vindictiveness that the remnant fled to the English Company's Islands eighty miles away, and they have been on the defensive ever since.

Prolonged friendships between hordes does not prevent the sudden cessation of diplomatic relations, and an occasional killing. The Gerrkee from Cape Shield had fraternized, hunted, and camped for years with the Juppa. Though they were of opposite moieties, they exchanged secret law, held totemic dances, and seemed inseparable. Yet one night when I was visiting their camp I saw that they were at loggerheads, and soon afterwards they brandished their spears, attacked each other, yelling threats and obscenities. It all started at the end of a successful day's hunting, when everyone had more than enough to eat and a Juppa woman hit her Gerrkee husband with a digging-stick after a trivial disagreement. He retaliated by knocking her down and bumping her head on the ground. Her father heard her screams, and remonstrated with his son-in-law, who then called on his brothers for assistance. In a flash, both clans were in a fracas. Women used their digging-sticks, or lengths of wood from the camp-fires, and darted in amongst the men to deal their blows. Men slashed with yard-long flat spear-throwers. After an hour of bedlam,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

628 [578] of dust and of yelping dingoes, the noise subsided; the families wandered back to their camps, and by morning the disturbance seemed to have been forgotten.

But not all disturbances end so amicably, for with a killing a blood-feud is established, and these sometimes go on for years. One day a nomad brought word to me of tribal hostilities in the hills behind Caledon Bay, and hastily loading camping-gear, medical equipment, and stores on the motor launch, I set out with two boys to make a quick trip down the Gulf coast. We saw smoke on a beach near Caledon Bay, and on the shore we found the Yulengor resting after their flight, nursing their wounds and cooking a turtle.

Two days previously the women, children, and a few old men had been left in a selected camp when the men went off on one of their kangaroo hunts. At the end of the day the hunters were weary, and camped for the night. Before dawn one of the frequent raiding or 'meringor' parties crept up on the women's camp and hurled spears into the sleeping groups. Casualties were light, but a passing spear fatally slashed an infant's wrist and killed the mother; several old men and children were also wounded. Two women ran to inform the men, who hastily collected the scattered members of the camp, and before morning the whole party was on its way to Caledon Bay.

I dressed their wounds and gave several injections for yaws, but the camp was restless. Through the night a dozen false alarms were given, and early the following morning the men set off in their canoes with women and children trailing along the beaches. We left shortly afterwards and passed some of the canoes and saw the paddlers waving and pointing to the first catch of the day, a large turtle which they had harpooned. Until we passed out of sight in the early afternoon a long wall of smoke rose from the track behind [724] the beaches where women and children were travelling and

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752 a family, and I have known him to roam by canoe for as far as one hundred and fifty miles with his wives, children, and dogs.

Women and children receive extensive fire burns; infants turn over in their sleep and roll into the fire and are shockingly injured. I saw one child's foot burnt so that the top of it grew along the shin, and the toes were missing. Another man had rolled into the fire and had burnt the skin off half his abdomen, and in the prolonged healing process the skin had formed a natural pouch, of considerable dimensions, in which he carried tobacco.

Burns are sometimes immersed in brine from evaporating tidal-salt-pans; a far less painful method, however, is to squeeze into the wound the moisture from the decaying swamp-rush, 'rarkai', and bind on the rotting pulp. Less severe burns are smeared with glutinous sap from an orchid stem, which seems to provide a temporary, flexible skin. [824]

Camp quarrels and head-splitting go together, but blows which would kill a white man merely crack the skull of Stone Age man. It is said that when the skull is wounded in several places, one operator grasps the head in his hands and presses it firmly together, and another binds it with string. [518]

Before treating abdominal spear wounds a patient is examined to see that his vital organs are intact. A freely bleeding wound is allowed to congeal of its own accord, but if the blood continues to flow or spurt a flat wooden spear-thrower is heated in the fire and thrust into it. I do not know if this is intended to cauterize, but many tributes are paid to the method. Hot water is poured into the opening and yellow hibiscus bark-pulp is plastered over it. At the end of three days the plaster is removed, the bark of two other trees is mixed with the hibiscus and inserted in the wound, and white clay is plastered over the poultice. If intestines protrude from a wound, a test is made to see if they are pierced. Water is given to the patient, and if none runs [824]

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YULENGOR

828 827 Stone Age man believes that his emotions are seated in his stomach, and his names for anger, fear, jealousy, and the rest, are descriptive of the changes that take place in the stomach in generating emotion. They make no distinction between anger, indignation, and jealousy; they are known as 'ngoi-mari-buna' ('ngoi' referring to underneath or the foundation), meaning the stomach boils.

[578] A man who refuses to support his relative in a quarrel is called 'ngoi kapumiri'; that is, he has a watery stomach (or as we should say in English 'no guts').

Pleasure, joy, and happiness are dependent on the stomach, which subsides into a peaceful calm on hearing welcome news. It was explained that when a man sees an enemy approaching, his stomach boils and his anger rises, but if the enemy says he has come to make peace, the man's anger disappears and his stomach subsides into a flat calm 'like the sea after a storm'; he has 'the wind taken out of his sails'.

Sorrow and regret also rise from the stomach. Fear comes from the same source, and rises and swells in the throat; Stone Age man also knows something about his 'heart in his mouth'.

[593] Love is dependent on the stomach, and the affection of a father for his son, or the devotion of mothers for their children, boils from the depths. I was reminded of the ageless biblical story of Joseph's meeting his treacherous half-brothers after many years; he was speechless, 'For his bowels did yearn for his (youngest) brother'.

152 It has often been suggested that aborigines have not the same highly developed affection for each other as white people, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Devotion is genuine, and intimate, and is openly expressed on scores of occasions which in a white community would call for little more than passing sympathy. The first initiation 304 881 in a boy's life reaches its climax in circumcision, when wide-[302] spread emotion is expressed. Women, girls, and children

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152 628 spearing any wandering nomad they may have chanced upon.

578 Camp quarrels are fiery and frequent, and everyone joins in on the slightest provocation. An imaginary slight, perhaps a small irregularity in food distribution, or the frequently [589] organized female attempts to annoy a bachelor by accusing him of making advances to married women, are enough to arouse resentment and inflame the emotions. Physical violence is usually preceded by a noisy battle of wit and the 578 exchange of abuse. Over forty commonly used abusive 195 epithets range from ingenious and witty references to male and female genital abnormalities to the calling into question of the integrity of parents, as well as that of future generations. It is also common to threaten to leave a man's bones to rot in the grave instead of removing them for decent [765] burial in a burying post; the formal curse is: 'May your bones rot before they can be lifted for interment.'

Every possible, impossible, and imaginary physical irregularity, ranging from the ludicrous to the obscene, is applied to the genital organs of both sexes, and all the references are shouted in the open camp. A favourite obscene remark is that an opponent's eyes, ears, and mouth are filled with placenta; a short abusive term accuses a woman of harlotry and describes fantastic intimacies on her part, whilst a man can have similar cryptic charges hurled at him.

Milder references are made to big eyes, knees, elbows, and sunken eyes; bones are said to be solid and lifeless like stone, and eyes and ears are described as blunt. Minor scornful phrases used by mothers to children include the impatient exclamation: 'Your fingers are thumbs'; arms and legs are said to be awkwardly long, the neck to be short, the head to be sitting on the shoulders.

578 Despite his emotional temperament, Stone Age man has artificial methods of arousing a display of temper. If he feels that he has been slighted and wishes to vent his grievances,

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he waits till everyone has returned to camp, then he hangs round his neck a string bag stuffed with feathers or bark; and biting on this, and shaking his head from side to side, and glaring fiercely and growling, he rushes out into the open camp. He brandishes his spears, and in a high, tremulously passionate monotone, he hurls defiance and abuse at his offenders. A biting-bag is considered to be an aid to stirring up anger and to impress the audience, but I must admit the practice and the facial contortions have always moved me to unseemly laughter.

Relatives and friends 'shadow' a disputant in every camp quarrel and make a show of stemming his emotions. They are not directly concerned in the disturbance, so they clasp their arms round the middle of the 'growling' relative to suggest that they are holding him back, and in serious cases they may even break his spears or deflect them before they can be thrown. More often than not these 'shadows' are there merely as a matter of form, to lend reality; they make a pretence of holding back the apparently angry, gesticulating warrior who seems to be struggling to get to his enemies. I have often wondered just how ludicrous a contestant would appear if he happened to break away, but they are careful not to struggle hard enough to do this. With amusing ingenuity Marupla, who had acquired a smattering of pidgin English from traders, rushed toward his 'illiterate' opponent waving a handful of spears. With a sidelong glance, to see that I was looking, he shouted in pidgin: 'Good thing white man here, you dead fella long time.'

Nomads cheerfully dice with death; they face it continually, and escape so barely, that their philosophy becomes a cheerful fatalism. From childhood they look calmly into the face of death, so that its bitterness is past or at least reduced to such an extent that in time of excitement they regard almost certain death as a dangerous pleasure. Life is cheap, so cheap that a violent death to any but horde

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821 825 789 the clouds together and pushing the wind before them in the way that water spreads out before a rolling stone. As he labours the snake weeps copiously and his tears fall as rain. If a snake is not available for rain-making, a bundle of grass may be tied together and submerged in a waterhole. Instructions are sung to this before its immersion, whereupon [776] the great Spirit who made the world and at times revealed himself through the mythical serpent, assumes the functions of the missing earthly reptile and sends the rain.

In west Arnhem Land another mythological serpent [184] sends rain in response to aboriginal wizardry. He shows himself as the rainbow, and thunder is the rumbling of his body as he turns over to urinate in the form of rain. To impress his admirers with his strength, Umbij hits two stones together till they flash fiery lightning.

821 789 888 If an old man is offended at some slight in the wet season he will threaten to send a storm. All day Munju had been mumbling and scowling at the door of his shelter, but his temper improved considerably toward sundown as nimbus clouds gathered to the accompaniment of distant thunder. That night a fierce tropical storm swept over the island, trees were struck by lightning, thunder crashed, and the wind howled as it levelled trees and shelters. In the sparkling stillness of the following dawn, the sun rose over a subdued camp, where Munju's honour had been vindicated, and he accepted the homage of his contemporaries. Also in the stormy wet season I heard a noisy termagant at Yirrkala [302] objecting to young women cutting their hair, and when they [578] persisted she threatened to call up a storm. That night we had heavy rain and a strong wind, and next day old Bamaja's exploit was referred to in subdued tones. Like most rain-makers she was aged, and having lived in the open air for sixty years with no other shelter than a sheet of bark, she knew her weather and could make a fairly accurate forecast.